

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



### THESIS

THE KEY ROLE OF NATO ACCESSION ON POLAND'S  
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

by

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September 2002

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**THE KEY ROLE OF NATO ACCESSION ON POLAND'S DEMOCRATIC  
TRANSITION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The accession of Poland into NATO in the spring of 1999 raises the question of how western attempts to transfer democratic institutions to new democracies in central Europe operated in reality as concerns reform and reaction. Among the obstacles to this process was a western ignorance about domestic social challenges and political conflicts. These go hand in hand with the process of democratic transition and show themselves starkly in the case of Polish politics, society, and military institutions in the years before 1999.

While transitioning to democracy, Poland experienced two types of threats: one from civilian politicians who tried to use the military to accomplish their political goals, and another from military officers with political ambitions. After the collapse of communism in 1989, Polish military forces remained highly visible in domestic politics for almost a decade and the issue of civil-military relations was at the center of government crises on three occasions.

Democratic civilian control over the military, a requirement to join NATO, became one of the primary political goals of an overwhelming majority of Polish elites since society saw the membership as the best guarantee of national security and a peaceful future. Politicians and government officials who did not accept or understand this determination were eventually voted out, dismissed, or now exist on the fringes of political life. NATO's plan for Poland to move toward full membership in the alliance resulted in a peaceful democratic transition.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

After the first free parliamentary elections and the collapse of communism in 1989, the Polish military forces remained highly visible in domestic politics for almost one decade. The issue of civil-military relations was at the center of government crises on three occasions. In 1992 and 1994, the ministers of defense were dismissed because of controversy over civilian oversight and the military forces' involvement in politics. In February 1995, the press reported that General Tadeusz Wilecki, the Chief of the General Staff, was to be appointed prime minister. These rumors undermined parliamentary support for the government of Waldemar Pawlak. Ultimately, an argument over whether the Chief of the General Staff should be subordinated directly to the president or remain subordinated to the defense minister became a crucial point of President Lech Walesa's struggle with the parliament in 1995.

The interim nature of post-communist Poland's political institutions was the greatest obstacle to establishing democratic civilian control over the armed forces. From 1989 to 1997, before a clear constitutional framework gave the basis for a new structure of civil-military relations, the Polish defense establishment was torn between Western pressure for civilian control and a domestic struggle for leadership over the military.

While transitioning to democracy, Poland experienced two types of threats: one from civilian politicians who tried to use the military to accomplish their political

goals, and another from military officers with political ambitions. The military forces nonetheless remain the premier symbol of Polish national sovereignty and independence and the Poles rank the military among their most trusted institutions.

While some problems still remain, today Polish officers are closer to the democratic professional ideal than ever before. At the same time as the majority of Poles insist on having an apolitical military, the officers share with the civilian population not only the acceptance of democracy as the system synonymous with national independence but also the understanding that in a democratic system the military must be apolitical and under civilian control.

#### **A. HYPOTHESIS**

Since the setbacks of the early 1990s, Poland has settled the political confrontations of democratic transition. This success has been possible mainly because of Poland's goal to reintegrate into Europe, to join with the democratic West, and to participate in its security arrangements. Wide domestic public support on one hand, and NATO's plan for Poland to move toward full membership in the alliance on the other, resulted in a peaceful democratic transition. The relationship of Polish society to its military and the role the military played in Polish history on one hand, and experience of martial law and military rule during last decade of communism on the other, were the reasons why control over the military was often the center of political fights and public attention.

Democratic civilian control over the military, a requirement to join NATO, became one of the primary political goals of an overwhelming majority of Polish elites since society saw the membership as the best guarantee of national security and a peaceful future.

Therefore, before the institutional framework of democracy was created, political parties were forced to address the concerns of the Polish people regarding NATO membership regardless of their differences and to embrace the standards for democracy outlined by NATO. Those who undervalued public opinion and the population's eagerness for national security and a "return to the West" through NATO membership, or those who did not embrace democratic values quickly enough ended up on the margins of domestic politics or disappeared from the political scene altogether.

Hence, the door opened by NATO for a "former enemy" played a key role in Poland's peaceful transition to democracy. If the alliance had not presented such an opportunity, the Polish transition to democracy might have been uncertain and might not have been nearly so peaceful or rapid.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

The Polish case is useful in studying the conflict between historical experience and new democratic institutions in post-communist countries because of the role the military has played in Polish politics throughout its history. It brings into focus the general determinants of civil-military relations in post-communist states, such

as the historical legacy of communism, adopted legal and institutional reforms, and economic factors, as well as the role of precedents established during the initial phase of transition.

Over the last decade, Western attempts to transfer democratic institutions to the new European democracies have not always proved successful. Not enough attention was paid to social challenges and domestic political conflicts, which go hand-in-hand with the transition process and the impact of external factors on the character of the transition.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, other European countries building democratic systems and hoping to join NATO or to participate in other European security organizations should consider the lessons learned from the Polish case. Like any democratic transition, Poland's case was not without difficulties and challenges. However, it is an example of a successful and peaceful transition to democratic institutions and ideals, including civilian control over the military, and Poland found a way to guarantee its security by attaining membership in NATO.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

The evolution of control over military forces in transition from post-communism to democracy is usually understood in relation to the structural transformation of the state. This research project will analyze the evolution

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<sup>1</sup> Forster, Anthony, Promoting Democratic Control of the Armed Forces in Central and Eastern Europe: Lessons Learned and Future Research Agendas. (Rep. No. TCMR 1.8, ch.4-5). Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 14-17 November 2000, Available <http://civil-military.dsd.kcl.ac.uk>

of control over military forces in the Polish transition to democracy in the context of domestic and international policy. The Polish experience demonstrates the direct influence of political circumstances on the quality and the nature of democratic reforms.

This thesis seeks to examine the implications of NATO opening towards enlargement and the possibility of joining NATO on Polish domestic politics. My argument is that public opinion and its understanding of the role played by NATO within European security arrangements are essential for the process of democratization of the states in transition.

Chapter II will outline Polish history prior to 1989. The primary focus will be on Polish military traditions, the role the military played in maintaining the national identity over last two centuries, the origins of Polish military ethos and the impact of communist rule on the Polish military.

Chapter III will delineate the development of international politics after 1989 with a focus on NATO policy towards former adversaries and its initiatives which opened the door for Poland's membership.

Chapter IV will discuss the process of redefining Polish national security policy after the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact. Separate sections will also examine political and social circumstances which shaped the new Polish National Security Strategy, and systemic changes undertaken to establish the democratic framework of the state.

Chapter V will center on obstacles Poland met in the process of establishing democratic civilian control over the military, which led to political crisis and even threatened its peaceful transition to democracy.

Chapter VI will conclude the thesis. It is my intent to show that, notwithstanding the role of political elites, Polish public opinion and society's eagerness for national security was decisive for restraining internal political fights and, in consequence, the peaceful continuation of transition to democracy and NATO membership.

## II. THE POLISH MILITARY BEFORE 1989

### A. POLISH NATIONALISM AND MILITARY TRADITION

The relationship of a society to its military reflects the country's tradition, culture, and history.<sup>2</sup> The army has historically held a special status in Polish politics. The survival of the Polish government and the continuity of the Polish state have been closely connected to the country's military.

At the same time, the values of society shape the esprit de corps of the armed forces in transitional polities, and, to a large extent, those values will determine the kind of professional military that will emerge from the transition period.<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of the Polish military goes back a millennium, but three key influences have shaped the Polish military ethos: the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; the army of the Second Republic of 1918-1939 and the trauma of World War II; and the Polish People's Army prior to 1989. It was formed by the struggle of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for regional supremacy against the Germans, the Swedes, and the Russians, as well as by the legacy of armed insurrections against foreign occupation.<sup>4</sup>

One need only look at Polish national heroes to see the distinct military relationship to society. The Polish

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<sup>2</sup> Joó, Rudolf. *The Democratic Control Of Armed Forces*. The Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union, Chaillot Paper 23, February 1996. p.21

<sup>3</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.23

founding fathers include military men who made great sacrifices for Poland. One military hero is Tadeusz Kosciuszko, an expert military engineer and leader of the failed 1794 uprising against Russia and Prussia. In modern times, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski's military vision for the restoration of Poland gave rise to the Second Republic in 1918.

Polish history places the soldier at the center of the Polish national independence movement. When the Polish state no longer existed on European maps in the late eighteenth century, it was the military ethos that became the central point of Polish national aspirations. After 1918, that ethos was carried intact into the brief independence of the restored interwar Second Republic. Furthermore, the Polish military was directly involved in politics during the twenty years of the Second Republic, which was ultimately an extension of the country's tradition of armed struggle for independence. It was the soldier who played a vital role in restoring Polish statehood, and the soldier ultimately became Poland's custodian and then its defender in World War II.<sup>5</sup>

Between the two world wars, the Polish army protected Polish national identity, and ultimately guaranteed the political rise of ethnic Poles. Poland was a multi-ethnic society, with ethnic Poles making up only 64% of the total population. The remainder of the population consisted of polonized ethnic Jews, Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians. Therefore, the Polish military officer enjoyed

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.24



a special place in the national identity of the majority of Poles.

Jozef Pilsudski's power between the two world wars owed much to the popular belief that, since not the government but the army had won the restoration of Polish statehood, only the army could guarantee the country's continued sovereignty. The brief Polish-Soviet war (1919 - 1921), as a result of which Poland's borders were extended eastward, made the military the custodian of Poland's statehood. This translated into tremendous political influence for Pilsudski and the Polish Army.

By the end of the Polish-Soviet war, the officer corps was at the center of Polish political life. Poles believed their army was the savior of Western civilization from Bolshevism. They believed it was not only the defender of Poland, but the army that "destroyed the victorious halo of Red Moscow, and dealt a mortal blow to the global revolutionary plans of the Third International."<sup>6</sup>

To be an officer in the army of the Second Republic meant to be one of the best and the brightest, dedicated to the country and to the commander (naczelnik). The officer's ultimate allegiance to the military leader and the nation, rather than to the government, was a legacy of pre-partition Poland that endured in the Second Republic and would continue through the forty-five years of the communist era. The Polish officer became the steward of his people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sikorski Wladyslaw, *Nad Wisla i Wkra: Studium polsko-rosyjskiej wojny 1920 roku*. Lwow: Wydawnictwo Zakladu Narodowego im. Ossolinskich, 1928. p.257

<sup>7</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.26

Continuing through history, the Poles never gave up the idea of continued armed struggle. In 1939, after the Germans, in cooperation with the Soviet forces, defeated the army of the Second Republic, the disintegration of the regular Polish forces was immediately followed by the rise of an underground resistance movement under the command of a Polish government in exile. The guerrilla movement in Poland would ultimately rank as one of the most powerful resistance movements in Europe during the Second World War, and the London-directed Home Army would eventually number close to 380,000 officers and men.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the guerrilla army at home, a Polish army organized in the West fought in the 1940 French campaign, in Norway, in the Champagne, and on the Maginot Line. Polish pilots fought in the Battle of Britain, shooting down 186 German planes (roughly 12 percent of total German losses during the battle). By the end of the war, Polish pilots had shot down close to 1,000 enemy planes. Polish units subordinated to their London-based government fought in Africa and northern Europe, took part in the Arnhem airborne landing, and contributed to the liberation of Europe on the Western front.<sup>9</sup>

## **B. POLISH MILITARY UNDER SOCIALIST RULE**

A third formative element of the Polish military ethos is the experience of the communist takeover, followed by four decades of communist control in the Polish People's Republic.

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<sup>8</sup> Pelczynski, Tadeusz, *Armia krajowa w dokumentach*. London: Studium Polski Podziemnej, 1970-1990. vol.3

<sup>9</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish*

The Polish military ethos carried over even into the communist Polish People's Army.<sup>10</sup> The Polish People's Army (LWP) absorbed a number of officers with Home Army experience, as well as some officers who were German prisoners of war, and officers from the Anders army who had decided to return to Poland, even though it was controlled by the Soviets. The force was dominated by officers from the Berling army, who set the tone for the early development of the Polish People's Army.

Starting as a small force, the Polish People's Army, organized, armed and trained by the Soviets in World War II, grew into the second largest Warsaw Pact force by the 1980s. By 1989 the Polish officers' *esprit de corps* had evolved into a blended form of nationalism, drawing from early Polish insurrections and later communism. The Polish People's Army nationalism was a result of Polish culture and its history of insurrection against its oppressors. However, it was blended with a communist character, influenced by Soviet domination and control.<sup>11</sup>

The communists attempted to fully integrate the Polish Army into the structure of state institutions subordinated to the Communist Party. The communist party executed its supervision over state's apparatus, including military through:

- determining priorities for state's institutions, therefore through influence on their planning

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*Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. pp.28-29

<sup>10</sup> Joó, Rudolf. *The Democratic Control Of Armed Forces*. The Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union, Chaillot Paper 23, February 1996. p.26

<sup>11</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.42

- selection of personnel for state and military positions (verification of candidates)
- monitoring the state institutions' activities through control over its own members designated to public positions.<sup>12</sup>

Communist domination over the Polish Army is considered a catalyst for its withdrawal from political interference.

(T)he legacy of communist domination over the Polish army is the history of the subjection of the institutional interests of the military to those of the communist party. While the communists tried to integrate fully the military into the structure of state institutions subordinated to the party, the military attempted to impose limits on the scope of that subordination. In this perspective, the experience of the Polish officer corps before the post-1989 transition made it likely that the military would seek autonomy from political authority even after the domination of the communist party had ended.<sup>13</sup>

Pre-martial law Poland withdrew from the homogeneous totalitarian model of the early Stalinist period and society had some limited opportunity to open up, but these changes did not apply to civil-military relations. Communist leadership considered the military together with the police, two typical power institutions, pillars of the regime and guardians of the system.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Zebrowski, Andrzej, *Kontrola cywilna nad Siłami Zbrojnymi Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*. Warsaw, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 1998. p.43

<sup>13</sup> Michta. p. 45, Author refers to the argument made by Kolkowicz Roman, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967. p.103

<sup>14</sup> Joó, Rudolf. *The Democratic Control Of Armed Forces*. The Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union, Chaillot Paper 23, February 1996. p.13

[T]he communist Party exercised neither democratic nor truly civilian control over the Army. It did not exercise democratic control, because the Communist Party's institutions and mechanisms lacked the basic requirements of democratic control and accountability.<sup>15</sup>

The issue of civilian control and oversight of the military was not a concern of politicians in communist Poland. The minister of defense, who was also the highest-ranking military officer, controlled the military forces. While in theory the defense minister was subordinated to the prime minister, in reality, both the civilian government and the military were fully built into a monolithic system, every element of which was subordinated to the communist party. The Polish communist party was directly represented in the armed forces through its cells and institution of the Main Political Directorate and its commissar's system of political officers. Both, the party cells and political officers were present in every unit from top to bottom of military structure and they had decisive influence over the career paths of fellow officers.<sup>16</sup> Party membership and political "correctness" was a necessary requirement for promotion and often decisive, especially for officer's career.<sup>17</sup>

Another alien body controlling the military structure from top to bottom was the Counterintelligence Service which was subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.12

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp.12-14

<sup>17</sup> Babula, Julian. *Wojsko Polskie 1945-89*. Warsaw, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 1998. p.305

Its main tasks were to spy on military personnel to ensure political reliability and to combat the 'internal enemy'.<sup>18</sup>

Before 1989, the Polish military was represented, in all official historiography as well as in communist propaganda, as an ideological monolith, unconditionally faithful to the communist party, and ready to defend socialism at any cost. The military was considered to be a totally indoctrinated and reliable communist party supporter, and a pillar of the regime.

However, documents de-classified after 1989, including files of the Polish Central Military Archives (Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe), demonstrate that the Polish military was never the ideological monolith alienated from Polish society as was thought, for many of them did not accept communist policy and some even openly defied orders. In 1956, when Polish troops were sent to 'restore order' in the city of Poznan, numerous acts of sabotage and mutiny took place in military units against the presence of Soviet troops on Polish territory, and Soviet control over the Polish military. Soldiers demanded the removal of Red Army officers from the Polish military, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Polish territory, and the return of the barracks, hospitals and logistic infrastructure that was under Soviet control to Polish society. From reports to the Main Political Directorate exists documentation of troops refusing to fight and officers who declared their intention to commit suicide rather than shoot protesting workers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.44

<sup>19</sup> Komorowski, Bronislaw, *Wojsko nie bylo monolitem*. Rzeczpospolita.

Those reports resulted in the Chief's of General Staff directive issued on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1956, banning the use of Polish military units in any actions to 'restore public order and security,' pointing out that these types of duties were exclusively the responsibility of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Militia. Unfortunately, the tragic events following in December 1970 and later during martial-law proved that military and party leaders had not learned those lessons well enough.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1970's and 1980's, General Wojciech Jaruzelski became the defining figure of the Polish armed forces, and the man who shaped Polish civil-military relations. He is considered one of the most influential military-leaders of Poland's communist era, however, his political role was full of contradictions. When he announced imposition of martial law, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1989, his simultaneous positions as the First Secretary of Polish communist party's (PZPR) Central Committee, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and the chairman of the newly established Military Council of National Salvation, gave him power as no politician before or later had held, but paradoxically his only political power was military.<sup>21</sup> Although he had suppressed the Solidarity movement in 1981, he peacefully transferred power to the opposition that had always stated that its goal was the end of communism in Poland, and even more interestingly, the punishment of himself, General Jaruzelski, and his associates.

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No.150, 06.29.2001

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Eisler, Jerzy, *Zarys dziejow politycznych Polski 1944-1989*. Warsaw, Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1992. p.179

Jaruzelski's martial law did not destroy Solidarity but rather 'reduced' it to a conspiracy at a time when an attempt to seize power by the union would have resulted in disaster. When Gorbachev and his *perestroika* made the transfer of power possible, Jaruzelski transferred power to Solidarity.<sup>22</sup>

After the imposition of martial law in 1981, Jaruzelski became the national political leader who presided over the final phase of the demise of communism in Poland and formed and shaped the Polish Army moving it into its post-communist transition. After 1989, Jaruzelski continued to command respect among Polish officers, who tended to see him as a tragic Polish patriot working from within to save the nation in the great romantic tradition of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.42

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



### III. NATO AND NEW PEACEFUL POLITICAL ORDER OF EUROPE

#### A. AGENT OF CHANGE

1989 was the starting point for fundamental changes in, not only the policy of NATO's and Warsaw Pact's member states, but in global politics. They were symbolized not only by the fall of the Berlin Wall, but in addition, politically they were: the end of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, of a Europe divided into two enemy blocks, the unification of both German states, and finally resulted in the appearance of many independent states in central and southern Europe and in Asia.

NATO played a crucial role in this process as a guarantor of security, freedom and independence for its members. It sustained the strategic balance of powers and supported the construction of European democratic institutions. The alliance insured stability which was necessary to end the hostility between the two political blocs. Obviously, the end of the Cold War had great impact on NATO itself.

Jeffrey Simon, in *NATO Enlargement & Central Europe: A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, describes four distinct stages of political development for Europe and NATO in the 1990s.

The first geo-political strategic period following the end of the Cold War, according to Simon, occurred from 1989-1990.<sup>24</sup> This period was characterized by a "euphoria"

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<sup>24</sup> Simon, Jeffrey. *NATO Enlargement & Central Europe, A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. 1996. p.7

emanating from the sudden creation or re-establishment of independent nation-states that promised new freedoms based on the principles of democracy. In addition, their optimism was fueled by the possibility of becoming a part of Europe, including the hope of joining NATO and/or the European Community. The first outstanding formal change of NATO was expressed by its July 1990 London Declaration. This declaration of a 'transformed North Atlantic Alliance' offered the 'hand of friendship' to the Soviet Union, to a few other states including Poland, and to the members of the still existing Warsaw Pact, to establish regular diplomatic contacts and mutual relations based on cooperation.<sup>25</sup> These negotiations resulted in Germany's reunification in October 1990 and the emergence of a new continental power. In addition, NATO was enlarged to include the former German Democratic Republic in its security guarantee extending its membership to the Polish border.<sup>26</sup>

The second period, beginning with the German reunification in 1990 and lasting through the end of 1991, was characterized by the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and the failed coup in the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

During 1991, several events occurred in Europe that indicated Europe's willingness to engage the East. In Copenhagen in June 1991, NATO commenced the North Atlantic Council (NAC) ministerial meetings, which sanctioned

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<sup>25</sup> North Atlantic Council, London Declaration, par. 6-8

<sup>26</sup> Simon, Jeffrey. *NATO Enlargement & Central Europe, A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. 1996. pp.7-8

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.8

developing military ties with the east. The following November, in Rome, a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance was developed, which was designed to replace NATO's long-standing policy of Flexible Response. The new concept declared a shift to a more politically active Alliance, defined roles for NATO's military in peace and crisis, and became the cornerstone of NATO's transformation as it set out the principles and considerations affecting the future role and the policy of the Alliance.<sup>28</sup> One month later the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was created to strengthen the ties to Eastern states begun in July 1990 by the London initiatives for diplomatic relations.

The third period, beginning in January 1992 and continuing through 1993 witnessed the disintegration of several states: the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. In total, over twenty new states emerged in Europe. In addition, Russia continued to withdraw its troops from Germany and Poland.<sup>29</sup>

During this period, NATO was redefining its strategic role in the Pan-European organizations. It was clear NATO needed a military mission to justify and adjust its military structure, forces and perhaps its very existence. The mission of NATO gravitated towards peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations.

...At a June meeting in Oslo, the alliance decided to offer peacekeeping services to the Conference

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<sup>28</sup> NATO Handbook. Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001, p. 44

<sup>29</sup> Simon, Jeffrey. *NATO Enlargement & Central Europe, A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. 1996. p.8

on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), including advice, support logistics, observers, forces and planning support or coordination. Secretary General Wörner personally pushed this idea very hard this year, and the alliance is confident of its capabilities...in this area...we have found that peacekeeping done by normal combat troops is very successful...NATO leaders like to say they strongly support the CSCE, and they were quick to portray NATO and CSCE (along with the European Community and the Western European Union) as "interlocking" not competitive institutions.<sup>30</sup>

By September of 1992, the NAC agreed to make available alliance resources in support of UN, CSCE and EC peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and monitoring heavy weapons. In December of 1992, when the Defense Planning Committee expressed concern about risks to European security posed by regional conflicts, they recognized that NATO possessed a unique capability to contribute to peacekeeping operations in response to requests from the UN or CSCE, that support to these organizations should be included in NATO missions and that NATO would remain the essential forum for consultation among the allies.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, during this period, NATO sent a strong message that it was now in the peacekeeping business, and was willing to support operations throughout Europe.

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<sup>30</sup> David Shore, "NATO: Briefers babble, Bosnia burns", The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, September 1992, Available <http://www.bullatombci.org/issues/1992/s92/s92.perspective.html>

<sup>31</sup> SHAPE, The Evolution of NATO and Ace, available <http://www.shape.nato.int/HISTORY/evolut92.htm>

Also, during this period, Boris Yeltsin signaled his support, and then change of mind about NATO's enlargement into Central Europe.

By the beginning of 1992, Alexander Rutskoi, the vice-president chosen personally by Yeltsin, and Ruslan Khasbulatov, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, another former supporter of Yeltsin, had emerged as leaders of an opposition movement bitterly opposed to Gaidar's economic policies and Kozyrev's western-oriented foreign policy. By the end of 1992, the opposition groups were moving towards a power struggle against the Russian president which reached a climax in late September of 1993 when Rutskoi and Khasbulatov led the parliamentarians in an armed revolt that almost succeeded in overthrowing the government. The rebellion was quelled only after Yeltsin had ordered loyal military forces to storm the Russian parliament building. Yeltsin's military action inflicted great damage on his political reputation as an authentic democratic leader and henceforth his policies moved closer to those hardline military leaders whose support he needed to maintain order and remain in power.<sup>32</sup>

NATO and EU hesitancy toward enlarging into Central Europe, coupled with Russia's pursuit of a "Near Abroad" policy, and another failed coup attempt in Russia in 1993 increased Central European pessimism about Russia's prospects for democratic political development, and national security east of NATO. Skepticism about support from the West grew.<sup>33</sup>

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32 Alan F. Fogelquist, Ph.D. *Russia, Bosnia and the Near Abroad*. Paper Presented April 19, 1995 at the International Conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina Organized by Bilkent University and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Available <http://eurasianews.com/bilklast.htm>

33 Simon, Jeffrey. *NATO Enlargement & Central Europe, A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. 1996. pp.8-9

The fourth period, recognized by Simon, opened with NATO's January 1994 Brussels Summit, which adopted the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), Partnership For Peace (PFP), and committed the Alliance to future enlargement.<sup>34</sup>

## **B. POLICY TOWARDS FORMER ADVERSARIES**

### **1. The North Atlantic Cooperation Council**

The first meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) on December 20, 1991 was the immediate and direct consequence of the North Atlantic Council's Declaration on Peace and Cooperation (The Rome Declaration) and NATO's new Strategic Concept, both issued a month earlier in Rome.<sup>35</sup> The alliance invited the foreign ministries of all the former Warsaw Pact members to meet their NATO counterparts and to "develop a more institutional relationship of consultation and cooperation on political and security issues."<sup>36</sup>

In particular the Rome Declaration proposed the following activities:<sup>37</sup>

- annual meetings with the North Atlantic Council at ministerial level;
- periodic meetings with the North Atlantic Council at Ambassadorial level;
- additional meetings with the North Atlantic Council at ministerial or ambassadorial level as circumstances warrant;

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.9

<sup>35</sup> Both available <http://www.nato.int/docu/basics.htm>

<sup>36</sup> North Atlantic Council, The Rome Declaration, Rome 1991. par. 11

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

- regular meetings, at intervals mutually agreed, with:
  - o NATO subordinate committees, including the Political and Economic Committees;
  - o the Military Committee and under its direction other NATO Military Authorities.

Under auspices of the NATO committees, the NACC states would hold meetings related to security issues such as defense planning, arms control, democratic concepts of civil-military relations, civil-military coordination of air traffic management, and the conversion of defense production to civilian purposes.<sup>38</sup>

Initially, NACC was comprised of mainly European states and had a character of a European organization. It was composed of the sixteen NATO members, six states of central Europe and three Baltic states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States were invited to join the organization soon after its first meeting, its change in character became apparent. As a result, there were three distinct groups of NACC participants:<sup>39</sup>

- The states that wanted to join NATO as soon as possible (e.g. central European states);
- The states that advocated cooperation without declaring their intent to join the Alliance;

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<sup>38</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed. The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. p.95

<sup>39</sup> Kupiecki, Robert. *NATO u progu XXI wieku*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ASKON, 2000. pp. 49-50

- The states without precise expectations towards cooperation or unable to utilize the offer (e.g. non-European former Soviet Union states).

In addition, there was Russia which had interests opposite to its former central-European satellites, and Ukraine trying to gain its independent place in NATO policy.<sup>40</sup> It soon became apparent that NACC was not able to take any action toward many issues raised at the meetings and the organization became "a gigantic talking shop."<sup>41</sup>

NACC was a token of NATO openness towards new forms and areas of cooperation in a dynamically developing international situation, but its capabilities were limited because of the diversity of its participants, and their different political goals and expectations. In such circumstances, January 1994 NATO Summit in Brussels launched the initiative of Partnership for Peace (PfP). This new initiative was to remain within the overall framework of the NACC, however, as "the experience, interests and capacities of NATO's partners" varied extensively, "the pace and scope of cooperation under the PfP" was to "reflect the requirements of each individual partner."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>41</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed. The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. pp.95-96

<sup>42</sup> Moltke von, Gebhardt. *Building a Partnership for Peace*. NATO Review. No.3 June 1994. Available <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/rev94-3.htm>



## 2. The Partnership for Peace

At the January 1994 summit in Brussels, NATO invited all the states participating in NACC to join the Partnership for Peace initiative. Other European countries wishing to join PfP were encouraged to do so upon individual agreement with the alliance. This initiative was launched to bring the militaries of the CSCE area closer to NATO standards to enable future joint activities such as peacekeeping, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations to be more successful and efficient. Since its inception, participation in PfP has given NATO's partners a chance to prepare for membership if they were willing to take full advantage of the opportunities of participation in PfP,<sup>43</sup> however, its founding documents do not offer any precise timetable or criteria to enable them to attain membership.

The PfP Framework Document has given NATO's partners the opportunity to demonstrate their intent and level of preparation for NATO membership, and the compatibility of their weaponry and military procedures. In return, participants receive NATO's "commitment to consult with any active participant if the partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security."<sup>44</sup>

The PfP moved the cooperation from general activities of NACC to individual programs of cooperation between NATO

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<sup>43</sup> Aspin, Les. *New NATO, new Europe*. NATO Review. No.1 February 1994. Available <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/rev94-1.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Moltke von, Gebhardt. *Building a Partnership for Peace*. NATO Review. No.3 June 1994. Available <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/rev94-3.htm>

and each of its partners. The scope of the PfP is expressed in its objectives:<sup>45</sup>

- a. Facilitation of transparency in national defense planning and budgeting processes;
- b. Ensuring democratic control of defense forces;
- c. Maintenance of the capability and readiness to contribute, subject to constitutional considerations, to operations under the authority of the UN and/or the responsibility of the CSCE;
- d. The development of cooperative military relations with NATO, for the purpose of joint planning, training, and exercises in order to strengthen their ability to undertake missions in the fields of peacekeeping, search and rescue, humanitarian operations, and others as may subsequently be agreed;
- e. The development, over the longer term, of forces that are better able to operate with those of the members of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Cooperation of NATO and any individual partner state within PfP initiative is based on Individual Partnership Program (IPP), which is jointly developed and accepted, and which contains the partner's political aims in PfP, its assets to be made available for PfP purposes, the broad objectives of cooperation, and specific activities which are going to be implemented in each one of the cooperation

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<sup>45</sup> Partnership for Peace: Framework Document. Available <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic.txt>

areas.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, despite initial skepticism among the Central and Eastern European countries about PfP, who perceived PfP as a mechanism to postpone their membership in NATO, this initiative turned out to be a flexible arrangement capable of accommodating multiple functions as diverse as the PfP partners' reasons for participating.<sup>47</sup>

PfP also appeared to be a very effective mechanism to bring the militaries of NATO's partners to a basic level of interoperability with the Alliance, and it played the key role in supporting the transformation of the candidates' militaries to the levels required for membership.

[PfP] proved an extremely effective way gradually to build professional bonds, to harmonize standards and procedures, and to transform the technical and organizational incompatibilities into functioning systems. Once the militaries of the three candidate countries recognized the Partnership for Peace as the practical road towards NATO membership, they became its unequivocal proponents.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> NATO Handbook. Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001, p. 69

<sup>47</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed. The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. p.98

<sup>48</sup> Karkoszka, Andrzej. *Following in the footsteps*. NATO Review. No.1 Spring 2002. Electronic only, available <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue1/main.htm>

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## IV. MILITARY REFORM IN THE POLISH TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

### A. NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Similarly, as in most of the new democracies of central and Eastern Europe, Polish strategic choices were shaped by six main factors:<sup>49</sup>

- Threat perception especially in relation to former Soviet Union
- Strong 'anti-Yaltaism' expressed in the desire to end what was seen as an artificial division in Europe, essentially its 'ghettoisation' in 'Eastern Europe'
- Defense choices were strongly influenced by the nature of domestic political and economic transition
- Poland was keen to facilitate the eastward projection of western European stability
- The country felt that it had a traditional historical and cultural affiliation with the 'West', and was eager to 'return to Europe'
- The developing geopolitical situation in Europe, particularly with regards to Russia, was an important driver influencing choice in this sphere.

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<sup>49</sup> Karkoszka, Andrzej. *Strategic Defence Choices in Central and Eastern Europe*. In A. Forster, T. Edmunds and A. Cottey (Eds.), *Transforming Postcommunist Militaries: Professionalisation of Armed Forces in Central and Eastern Europe* (Rep. No. TCMR 1.12, p. 5). UK Joint Services Command and Staff College, July 2001. Available <http://civil-military.dsd.kcl.ac.uk>

Poland had to consider its role in post-Cold War Europe, and both the Solidarity and post-communist SLD/PSL (the Democratic Left Alliance/the Polish Peasants' Party) governments supported integration into European security structures as a national security objective. Despite political discord over defense relations and presidential and parliamentary authority, parties across the political spectrum agreed that NATO membership was in Poland's interests.

It is difficult to define the moment when the Polish road to NATO began. In a political sense, it is undoubtedly linked to transformation of the late 1980s - early 1990s. At the "round table", proposals for Poland to leave the Warsaw Pact or even more, to join NATO - naturally - had not yet been formulated. Yet, the need to reorient our foreign policy seemed both possible and unavoidable even then, especially since the USSR, *perestroika* was advancing by leaps and bounds. The Brezhnev doctrine was challenged. We sensed our historic opportunity although we did not fully realize how far it could go and how fast it would be implemented. After all, we were the ones who paved the way for transformations.<sup>50</sup>

The first formally binding document which turned Polish national security policy towards NATO was a document prepared by the National Defense Council titled "Security Policy and Defense Strategy of the Polish Republic."<sup>51</sup> Signed by President Lech Walesa on November 2, 1992, this document recognized that revolutionary political changes in the Soviet Union and the countries of central and Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1992 were primary reasons for

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<sup>50</sup> Kwasniewski, Aleksander, *Dom\_wszystkich\_Polska*. Warsaw: Perspektywy Press, 2000. pp. 216-217

<sup>51</sup> Available in *Wojsko Polskie - informator*. Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 1995

unavoidable changes to the security policy of the state. Since the signing of this document, Polish security policy has been based upon following principal premises: <sup>52</sup>

- Strengthening pro-European orientation through integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic community structures
- Pro-active participation in establishing a new European order based on comprehensive cooperation between states, foreign and international, governmental and non-governmental organizations, especially UN and OSCE.
- Development of good relationships with all countries, especially good-neighbor relations
- Strengthening and advancing new regional ties, such as those between Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Baltic states, etc
- Enhancement of any activities aimed at stabilization and comprehensive development, especially economic stabilization
- Development of bi-lateral and multi-lateral international cooperation, especially with western European states and the United States

From Poland's standpoint, NATO's collective defense mission was to assist Poland in dealing with any threat of aggression or coercion involving the former Soviet Union. Although Poland did not believe any immediate threat existed, it did believe that it could have been pulled

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<sup>52</sup> Kaczmarek, Julian, *NATO-Europa-Polska 2000*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Atla 2, 2000. p. 203-205

unwillingly into a war if a conflict in the former Soviet Union spilled over into the region. An unexpected, large influx of refugees, the disruption of supplies and resources, and infrastructure destruction were among the risks of paramount concern to Poles and Polish authorities. These types of concerns pushed Poland toward the collective defense umbrella of NATO.<sup>53</sup>

## **B. ELECTORATE AND ITS REPRESENTATIVES**

Professor Leongin Pastusiak of the Gdansk University states that "support of Polish political elites for membership in NATO is deep, sound and based on more rational reasons. Polish society is more emotional. It wants to be a part of united, cooperative and safe Europe, and that's why Poland is the member of NATO."<sup>54</sup>

Although, the political, social and economical circumstances of early 90s did not support implementation of national defense policy drafted by Polish political elites. As all new European democracies, Poland was suffering from deep economic crisis of transition to the market economy. Also it was not free from some

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<sup>53</sup> Kwasniewski, Aleksander, *Dom\_wszystkich\_Polska*. Warsaw: Perspektywy Press, 2000. p.225

<sup>54</sup> Taken from Wojciech Pawlak, *Spoleczne poparcie dla przystapienia Polski do NATO. Edukacja obywatelska i dzialalnosc informacyjna w wojsku wobec perspektywy integracji z NATO*. Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej - Departament Spoleczno-Wychowawczy, Oficyna Wydawnicza WOLUMEN, 1997. p. 16. PhD Longin Hieronim Pastusiak is the member of the Political Sciences' Council of the National Academy of Sciences, the author of over 600 publications including over 60 books on the international policy matters; since 1998 vice president of the International Council of Parliamentarians for Global Action in New York; Senator, the member of parliamentary Commission of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and Commission of National Defense and Public Security, delegate to NATO Parliamentary Assembly. (Based on info available at <http://www.senat.gov.pl>)



nationalisms and minorities demanding their rights. Lack of strong political parties made political scene unstable.<sup>55</sup>

In 1991, there were over 100 political parties on the Polish political scene, and in 1992 this number went beyond 200.<sup>56</sup> The bulk of them represented the former Solidarity movement. Some parties represented post-communist political forces. The process of formation of political parties, ideologically and structurally, was ongoing and far from consolidation. Very often, they defined themselves as electoral coalitions rather than parties characteristic of the European political scene. The programs of many of those parties and organizations focused primarily on domestic politics: political, social, and economic problems of transition.<sup>57</sup>

About 43 percent of the electorate turned out to vote on October 27, 1991 for the first totally free parliamentary elections in postwar Poland. They elected the most diverse parliament in the country's history:

- The Democratic Union (UD), headed by former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, received 62 seats (13.48%) in the Sejm (the upper house) and 21 of 100 available in the Senat (the lower house). (See Figure 1. and 2.)

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<sup>55</sup> Kaczmarek, Julian, *NATO-Europa-Polska 2000*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Atla 2, 2000. p.205

<sup>56</sup> Stachura, Jadwiga, *Partie polityczne a polska polityka zagraniczna. Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 1992*. Warsaw: Administrative and Maintenance Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available <http://www.msz.gov.pl/warecka/rocznik.html>

<sup>57</sup> *Partie i ugrupowania polityczne - vademecum*. Warsaw: Redakcja Dokumentacji Prasowej PAP, 1991

- Just behind it was the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), an alliance of post-communist parties and organizations, which obtained 60 seats (13.04%) in the Sejm and 4 in the Senat.
- The Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN) obtained 51 of seats (11.09%) in the Sejm and 4 in the Senat.
- The Post-communists known as the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL) won 50 seats (10.87%) in the Sejm and 9 in the Senat.
- The Catholic Action for Elections (WAK) received 50 seats (10,87%) in the Sejm and 9 in the Senat.
- The Centrum Alliance (PC) won 44 seats (9.56%) in the Sejm and 9 in the Senat.
- The Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD) obtained 37 seats (8.04%) in The Sejm and 6 in the Senat.

The next seventeen groups each managed to win less than 8 percent of the seats in the Sejm, including Solidarity which won 27 seats and the Polish Beer Lovers' Party (PPPP) which won 16 seats. Fourteen parties obtained less than 10 seats in the Sejm.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Dudek, Antoni, *Pierwsze wolne wybory parlamentarne 1991*. Available <http://wybory2001.interia.pl/historia/1991> The author is a historian of the Institute of National Remembrance.

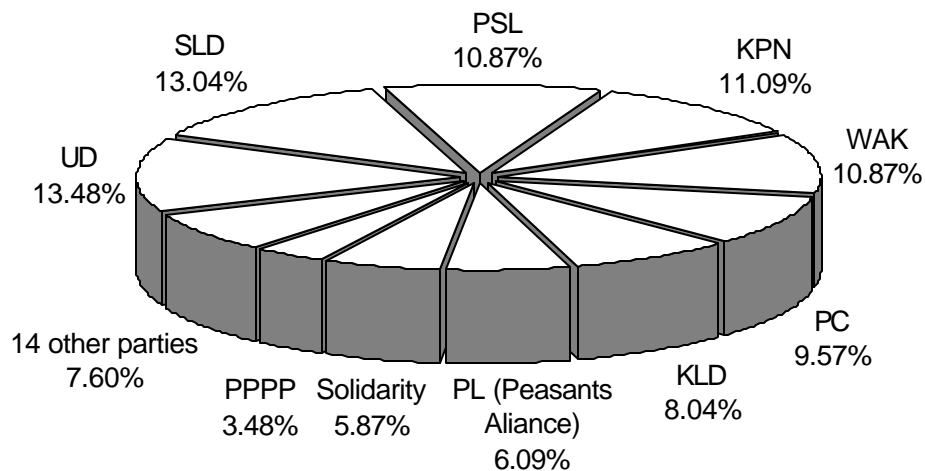


Figure 1. Sejm Election Results October 27, 1991

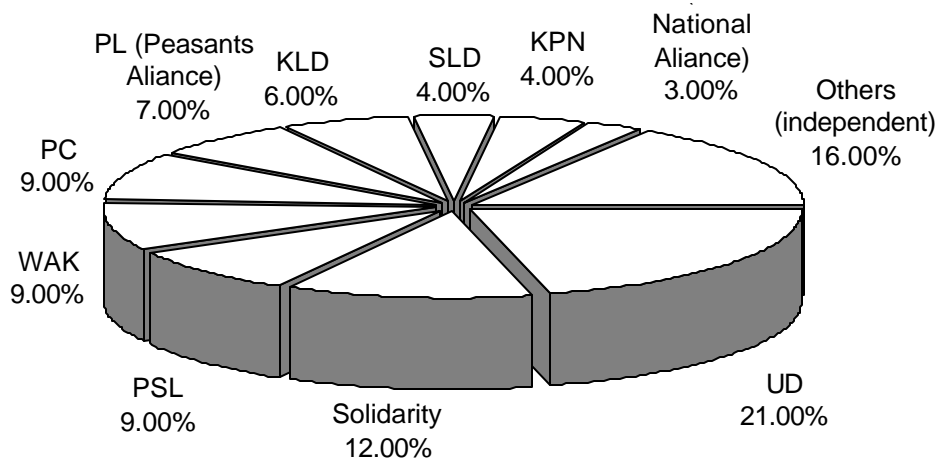


Figure 2. Senat Election Results October 27, 1991

The diversity of the Sejm and political fights, especially between post-solidarity formations, were serious obstacles for the effectiveness of the higher house of the parliament in its constitutional missions, including

shaping national foreign policy. Therefore, the Sejm's role in establishing consensus beyond party lines for state's foreign policy was almost impossible.

Two categories of parliamentary groups were able to seek consensus. The first included parties opened for integration with the 'West' and Polish participation in European security systems. Those parties' programs matched in many ways "Security Policy and Defense Strategy of the Polish Republic."<sup>59</sup> The second category, represented primarily by the Catholic Action for Elections, recognized consensus beyond party line as a political compromise, and its support for the state's national security policy was limited by the fear that integration with the 'West' threatened national sovereignty and the 'Christian-National identity' of Poles. Most of its members were against ratification of the 'Europe Agreement' establishing an association between Poland and the European Communities, which was signed on December 16, 1991.

The Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN) was also against ratification of the Europe Agreement. From the viewpoint of the party leaders, the treaty was a threat to polish sovereignty and national identity and ratification of this document would subordinate Poland to the European Communities' laws and institutions. KPN wished-for optional central and east-European integration, which would include the newly independent states between

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<sup>59</sup> Stachura, Jadwiga, *Partie polityczne a polska polityka zagraniczna. Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 1992*. Warsaw: Administrative and Maintenance Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1992. Available <http://www.msz.gov.pl/warecka/rocznik.html>

the Baltic and Black Sea under the leadership of Poland and Ukraine.<sup>60</sup>

The right-wing and center-right-wing political forces were much more concerned about the future of Polish national identity during integration process than about economic issues. Political forces of Christian-national orientation opposed the type of integration already taking place in Europe and they put forward, as an option, the idea of the 'Community of Homelands', which meant overcoming economic barriers without any loss to national sovereignty or independence. They stated that integration already taking place was already limiting Polish sovereignty in many areas, especially in economic, political and legal realms. Therefore, these political forces demanded ratification of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and acceptance of the European Court's of Human Rights competence with a clear and formal stipulation that international organizations would not interfere Polish law.<sup>61</sup>

The desire for Polish membership in NATO has not always been evident or popular in Polish civil society. In the middle of 1990, when a bi-polar world order still existed, the question of "What political development would be the best for Polish national security?" arose. Sixty percent of Poles opted for simultaneously disbanding both

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<sup>60</sup> *Partie i ugrupowania polityczne - vademecum*. Warsaw: Redakcja Dokumentacji Prasowej PAP, 1991

<sup>61</sup> Stachura, Jadwiga, *Partie polityczne a polska polityka zagraniczna. Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 1992*. Warsaw: Administrative and Maintenance Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available <http://www.msz.gov.pl/warecka/rocznik.html>

NATO and the Warsaw Pact and the development and participation in new, common security arrangements for all of Europe (whatever it would mean). Only 5 percent of those polled opted for leaving the Warsaw Pact and joining NATO, 10 percent wanted to stay in the Warsaw Pact, and 8 percent wanted Poland to become neutral.<sup>62</sup>

Less than two years later, in March 1992, 77 percent of Poles polled thought the government should press for NATO membership; 30 percent of those strongly favored joining NATO and 47 percent were unsure but viewed Poland's potential membership in NATO in a positive light. Only one of every ten Poles was totally against integration into NATO.

In October 1993, the proportion of the population strongly convinced of the necessity of NATO membership increased to 38 percent, but percentage of those positive but unconvinced slightly decreased to the level of 43 percent. The following two years did not bring any significant change in the tendency of slow but increasing public support for state's policy toward NATO membership. However, in 1997, 90 percent of Poles were convinced of the necessity of NATO membership: 47 percent polled thought Poland should join NATO as soon as possible and 43 percent were positive about membership but they did not see any reason to expedite NATO membership. Only 3 percent of Poles were against NATO membership and 7 percent did not have any opinion about this matter.(see Table 1)

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<sup>62</sup> All the numbers are based on public polls by TNS OBOP Public Opinion Research Center. Partially available at <http://www.obop.com.pl>

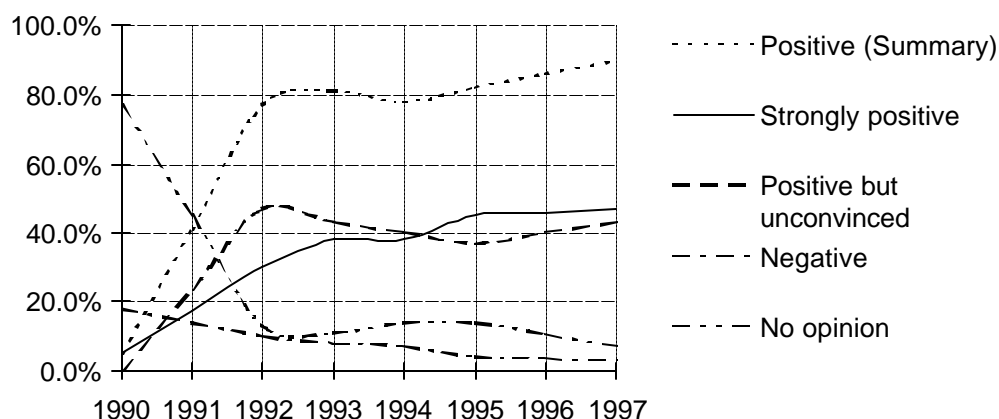


Table 1. Public support for Polish membership in NATO

In summary, between 1991-1992 Polish society radically changed its perception of NATO and eventually decided that the best guarantee for their national security would be obtained with NATO membership. Since then Poles' relationship with NATO in comparison to other key political issues, like integration with Europe or domestic politics, has been extraordinary. Even during the time of the deepest crises of public sentiment in 1992-1993 they did not lose their belief in the necessity to join this organization.

In trying to understand the Poles' relation to NATO, we have to keep in mind that for several decades before 1989 this organization was a 'black character' of communist propaganda, and this image had, to some extent, influenced perception of Polish society. However, since NATO membership was defined as the political goal of the state in response to developing international situation of 1992, it was immediately accepted by majority of population, and

eventually public support for this idea had been steadily growing.

However, the most important observations from these statistics are:<sup>63</sup>

- No internal politics, even the deepest economic, social or political crisis changed perceptibly public desire of national security and its intent to join NATO
- The only case when the number of those who opted for staying outside of any international military organizations temporary increased took place when Russia strongly protested against NATO enlargement in the end of 1993. Therefore, polls prove that the public opinion depended on international situation and was sensitive to international tensions.
- The opinions about membership in NATO were changing only between its supporters and those who did not have strong opinion. The number of those against the membership was almost constant and never beyond 10 percent.

The last observation makes also apparent that since the chances for Polish membership became realistic there was no significant electorate for any political party, which would make its political goal to reverse openly this process.

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<sup>63</sup> Confirmed also by polls made by CBOS Public Opinion Research Center. *Nowa rzeczywistosc. Oceny i opinie 1989-1999*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, 2000. p. 205



### C. CONSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Civil-military relations mirror the society and the political system in which they are built. The political system of a state in its transition to democracy consists of elements of both the old and new systems. Old and new laws and political institutions, each designed to serve a very different power structure exist side-by-side.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1989 and 1992 Poland went through the greatest systemic changes of the democratic transition period. Authoritarian or "real socialism" was replaced step-by-step by a framework of parliamentary democracy. This change was not just a single revolutionary act but a result of complex evolution. Constitutional changes were essential for this evolution of the political system. On one hand, amendments to the constitution were the result of ongoing social and political changes, on the other they were a catalyst for upcoming events.

Between 1989 and 1992, the Polish constitution was amended seven times. The nature, range, and importance of these amendments differed. Some of them effected very narrow but substantial area like the presidential election procedures or the length of parliamentary tenure. The first three changes were directly related to the political system of the state. The most sizable constitutional reform was made on the December 29, 1989. The constitution in force at the end of 1992 was dated the 22nd of July 1952, however,

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<sup>64</sup> Joó, Rudolf. *The Democratic Control Of Armed Forces*. The Institute for Security Studies of Western European Union, Chaillot Paper 23, February 1996. p.20

its content was substantially different than its original version of forty years prior.<sup>65</sup>

The starting point for subsequent systemic evolution was amendment to constitution made on April 7, 1989. This amendment rearranged the state's primary institutions. It reestablished state's bodies which had not existed for several decades: the lower house of the Parliament - the Senat, and the office of the president. The interrelations between state's institutions were also significantly changed. The Sejm became the higher house of the Parliament and maintained its position as the highest legislative body, but it shared its power with the lower house, and first of all with the president who was also given relatively large powers.

The amendment of April 1989 was the result of the Round Table agreement. To understand its significance we have to consider it with other political factors which were associated with the amendment such as the new electoral laws of both houses of the Parliament and the Law of Associations (*Prawo o Stowarzyszeniach*) which broke communist party control over any social movements and made possible activity of the free labor unions and independent political parties. All those factors together manifested the change from "real socialism", especially the communist party monopoly in the government where the communists were guaranteed by law to maintain a parliamentary majority. In

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<sup>65</sup> University of Warsaw Institute of Political Sciences. *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe w Polsce*. Warsaw, Dom Wydawniczy i Handlowy Elipsa, 1993. p.67

effect, these constitutional changes meant the turn towards political pluralism and parliamentary democracy.<sup>66</sup>

Not only did the successive changes in the old constitution not keep pace with social and political changes in the state but also, to some extent, they made the constitution unclear and even contradictory. Therefore, on October 17, 1992 it was replaced by an interim constitutional act - the "Little Constitution". Its objective was to eliminate existing ambiguities and contradictions of existing constitutional law and to establish a legal basis for more effective governance.<sup>67</sup>

The "Little Constitution" was a transitional document. Its intent was to bring together the competing political forces of Poland's early post-communist transition. The competing political forces were the "contract parliament" (guaranteeing control of Sejm to the communists) and the first democratically elected president who possessed a popular mandate for systemic change, and the moral authority of past anticommunist dissent. Therefore, interrelations between state's institutions were changed once again; the Sejm lost its legislative supremacy and the role of the Senat, the president and the government were elevated.<sup>68</sup>

Before the new constitution of 1997 superceded the 1992 "Little Constitution," presidential and government executive authority disputes rendered the oversight authority of the parliament over military relatively weak.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 68

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 88

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp.88-89

Forged as a compromise reflecting the power struggle between President Lech Walesa and the parliament, the 1992 Constitution gave the president a decisive voice on matters of national security.<sup>69</sup>

The president, as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, was instrumental in selecting the Minister of Defense as well as the Chief of the General Staff, the chiefs of the military services, the commanders of the military districts, and the commander of the overall armed forces. The 1992 Constitution in effect made the military a player in Polish domestic politics. Between 1992 and 1995, these constitutional prerogatives became a powerful incentive for President Walesa and senior military officers to bypass the institutions of the Ministry of Defense and to ignore the Defense Minister altogether. Another contributing factor indirectly tied to the constitutional question was the relative weakness of the Polish parliament, especially the lack of qualified staff to oversee military affairs.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.79

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. pp.79-80

## **V. CIVIL-MILITARY CONFLICTS, 1992-1997**

### **A. EXECUTIVE STRATEGIES TO ASSERT CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY**

It was the so-called Parys affair of 1992 and the Drawsko affair of 1994 that set the pattern for civil-military relations in Poland. Prior to becoming defense minister in the center-right Jan Olszewski government, Jan Parys had minimal to no exposure to the military. He was a staunch nationalist. He believed that all members of the Polish military were untrustworthy and that he was working with an institution loaded with Moscow spies. This constituted a hostile environment for civil-military relations. Parys became the focal point for the power struggle between the President and the Prime Minister when he forced the retirement of Adm. Piotr Kolodziejczyk, whom Walesa reportedly intended to be his choice for the planned position of general inspector of the armed forces. Understandably, senior Polish military officers had the perception that civilian control meant politicization, with the realization of the duality of political power.

After Kolodziejczyk's forced retirement, civil-military relations in Poland deteriorated rapidly. On January 29, 1992 shortly after taking office, Parys made several diplomatic mistakes that contributed to undermining civil-military relations. First, he announced in a speech to the top officials of the Defense Ministry Military Council that he was going to purge the military of all 'Russian agents'. He forced the retirement of all senior officers, who were members of General Jaruzelski's military

inner circle. He spoke of "traitors and death sentences" when referring to what he believed were military enemies, and he continuously insulted military personnel when he visited military units.<sup>71</sup> He would arrive with such a large security contingent that it was as if he was making a public statement that the Polish military was the "enemy," thereby gravely insulting the historical honor and privileged status of the Polish military.

The crisis became extremely acute when Defense Minister Parys during a meeting with the General Staff's officers on April 6, 1992 stated without mentioning any names, that "some officers are invited for meetings that the minister and the Chief of the General Staff have no knowledge of and are offered promotions in exchange for the support of the military in some kind of political game."<sup>72</sup> He was possibly referring to the meeting between Jerzy Milewski, a civilian closely associated with President Lech Walesa, and Gen. Tadeusz Wilecki. During the meeting, Milewski reportedly told Gen. Wilecki that he was the president's choice as the new chief of the General Staff. In the aftermath, the Prime Minister Jan Olszewski dismissed Parys, and President Walesa indeed promoted Gen. Tadeusz Wilecki to three-star rank and appointed him as the new chief of the General Staff.<sup>73</sup>

The crisis was part of a larger power struggle between Walesa and the Olszewski government over the actual scope of presidential authority on security and defense matters

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<sup>71</sup> Kurski Jacek and Semka Piotr, *Lewy czerwcowy*. pp. 64, Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1993.

<sup>72</sup> Groblewski, Kazimierz. *Wszystko juz bylo*. Rzeczpospolita. 10.12.1994. Available <http://www.rp.pl/archiwum>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

outlined in the 1992 Constitution. As the confrontation between the president and the minister of defense intensified, Parys defined his ministerial mission as a "struggle over the future of the political system in Poland: whether the system will be democratic or whether dictatorship will prevail."<sup>74</sup>

The Sejm's condemnation of Parys for triggering the 1992 confrontation allowed Wilecki to consolidate his position in relation to the civilian structures of the Ministry of Defense. As the "president's man," Wilecki and the military both became important factors in Polish domestic politics. Competition erupted between the president and the parliament for the allegiance of the General Staff. In effect, it became a prize. More importantly, the affair strengthened the perception among General Staff officers that the army faced a concerted onslaught from the civilians. As Wilecki observed later on, the army had the "right to defend itself." Most significantly, the Parys affair made it clear that the struggle for control over the armed forces and the allegiance of the military was an important and ongoing part of the Polish domestic political scene.<sup>75</sup>

#### **B. PRESIDENTIAL OPTION - MILITARY STRATEGIES TO RESIST DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY**

The second crisis, referred to as "the Drawsko affair of 1994," revealed a pattern of civil-military relations set forth by the previous scandal. Between 1992 and 1994,

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<sup>74</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.83

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. pp. 84-85

the General Staff became even more independent from the Ministry of Defense. The September 1993 parliamentary elections accelerated the process because a new defense minister was appointed. The newly appointed defense minister, Admiral Piotr Kolodziejczyk, suspended the 1993 regulations that restructured the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff because of alleged "inexactness of the legal terminology of the draft."<sup>76</sup> This decision preserved the arrangement favoring the General Staff over the civilian side of the Defense Ministry.<sup>77</sup>

At a September 1994 dinner at the Army's training site in Drawsko, a vote among the attending officers was initiated. President Walesa, Defense Minister Kolodziejczyk, Chief of the General Staff Wilecki, and a number of generals were present. Though never proven, it is rumored that President Walesa initiated the vote. The officers allegedly approved a vote of no confidence against Kolodziejczyk's continued leadership of the Defense Ministry. The minister of defense was taken completely by surprise.<sup>78</sup> It appeared that the whole event had been planned prior to the dinner. Immediately, the parliament investigated the matter.

Unlike the previous situation, the Parys case, the parliament sided with the defense minister against the generals. The parliament demanded the disciplining of the officers involved in the incident, reestablishing the

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<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.91

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Lentowicz, Zbigniew and Kazimierz Groblewski. Dzielenie skory na admirale. Rzeczpospolita. 10.06.1994 Available <http://www.rp.pl/archiwum>



ministry's direct control over the intelligence and counterintelligence services, and reasserting civilian control over military structures. However, the president fired Kolodziejczyk and reportedly granted monetary awards to some of the generals present at Drawsko. Soon after, the president rejected a list of officers submitted by Kolodziejczyk for promotion to general officer ranks.<sup>79</sup>

Keep in mind that the political neutrality of the military was one of Solidarity's most important postulates of the Round table agreements, but in spite of numerous promises and assertions made by President Walesa and the succeeding ministries' of defense that the military would maintain its neutrality, these promises appeared to be empty. Military officers also declared that the military would resist any involvement in politics, but their actions belied their words. At the Army's training site in Drawsko "political field exercises" were held and the generals enthusiastically participated.<sup>80</sup>

At a press conference immediately following the Drawsko affair, Prime Minister Pawlak expressed surprise that not only were the generals not punished but that President Walesa had given monetary awards to three of them. The prime minister also insisted that he did not know the three officers names because the president's chancellery had failed to provide that information to his office.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Lentowicz Zbigniew, *Walesa i generalowie*. Rzeczpospolita, 10.22.1994, 11.08.1994. Available <http://www.rp.pl/archiwum>

<sup>80</sup> Groblewski, Kazimierz. *Niebezpieczny poligon*. Rzeczpospolita. 10.12.1994. Available <http://www.rp.pl/archiwum>

<sup>81</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. p. 95, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

The next rift occurred between Jerzy Milewski, Walesa's former head of the National Security Bureau, and General Wilecki over the direction of institutional reform. This rift turned out to be a significant consequence of the Drawsko affair and of the progressive separation between the two elements of the Polish national defense establishment. A tug-of-war occurred, lasting several months. Finally, Milewski, frustrated with his one-time confidant Walesa, resigned his office as deputy defense minister. He gave interviews to the press accusing the General Staff of subverting Polish chances for NATO membership and then became campaign advisor for the post-communists' (SLD) presidential candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski.<sup>82</sup>

In January 1995, during the parliamentary debate over two competing programs of military control and subordination, the issue of who should control the Polish army came to a head. On January 19, 1995, President Walesa delivered a passionate speech to the Sejm (the lower house of parliament), arguing that the "army ought to be led by the military men, who know the problems and are experts on the subject," and asking for the adoption of his draft legislation. This legislation would have made the Polish General Staff directly subordinate to the president, thereby bypassing the Ministry of Defense and the parliament altogether. The Sejm Commission on National Defense submitted an alternative proposal that was supported by the ruling SLD/PSL post-communist coalition. The Sejm Commission's proposal advocated retaining and

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<sup>82</sup> Zdort D. Marcin, *Rodzynki na wage zlota*. Rzeczpospolita, 11.07.1995. Available <http://www.rp.pl/archiwum>

strengthening the existing structure of ministerial control over the General Staff and - reaffirmed the subordination of the chief of the General Staff to the defense minister.<sup>83</sup> The Sejm commission's draft was reminiscent of one dating back to the ideas of Jerzy Milewski, former chief of the National Security Bureau.

Walesa's proposal was quite the opposite. Walesa's proposal received limited support in the parliament but only from the pro-Walesa Non-Party Block in Support of Reforms (BBWR) and the nationalist Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN). Walesa's proposal was opposed not only by the PSL and SLD but also by the Union of Labor (UP) and the centrist Union of Freedom (UW).<sup>84</sup>

On June 29, 1995, the Sejm adopted new legislation regulating the Office of the Minister of National Defense. This new legislation subordinated the Chief of the General Staff and the military intelligence and counterintelligence services to the defense minister. Under the new law, the General Staff became an integral part of the Defense Ministry structure. On August 11, 1995, President Walesa vetoed the bill. He claimed that it would excessively reduce "the powers of the President on matters of national defense." The new law eventually did go into effect in 1996 after the election of the SLD's Aleksander Kwasniewski as Poland's president. This new law marked a turning point in Polish civil-military relations.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Michta, Andrew A., *The Soldier-Citizen. The Politics of the Polish Army After Communism*. p. 94, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. p.94

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 95

### C. PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT DOMESTIC POLITICS

The change in political systems, the first non-communist government and the first free elections in Poland's postwar history obviously resulted in positive public perception of domestic politics. However, public sentiment began to change very soon. Since 1992, negative opinions started to dominate. The next few years were notable because of the constant splitting of political forces, and the fights among post-Solidarity factions and against post-communist parties. Frequently changing governments, and presidential and parliamentary elections made public polls more positive only for a short time. Therefore, opinions regarding the political scene shortly became more a mirror reflecting current politics rather than a gage of the political problems of transition in general.<sup>86</sup> Political scandals coupled with struggles for control over the military jeopardized the fragile state of democracy and were immediately reflected by public opinion. (See Tables 2 and 3.)

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<sup>86</sup> CBOS Public Opinion Research Center. *Nowa rzeczywistosc. Oceny i opinie 1989-1999*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, 2000. pp.43-44

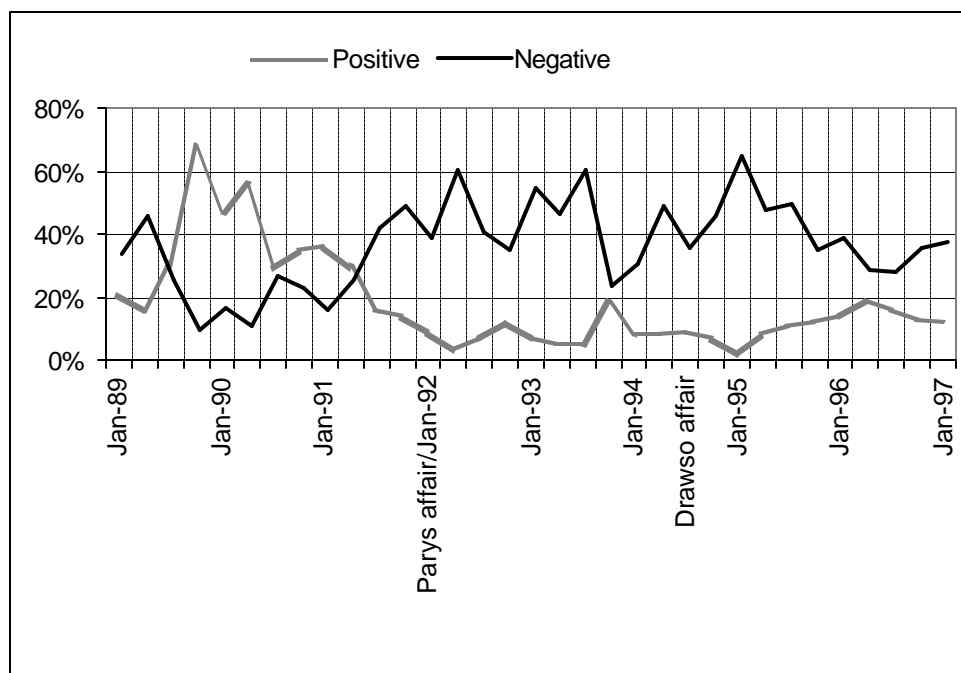


Table 2. Public opinion about domestic political situation.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Based on polls of CBOS Public Opinion Research Center. The polled were asked question: "What is your opinion about current political situation in Poland?"

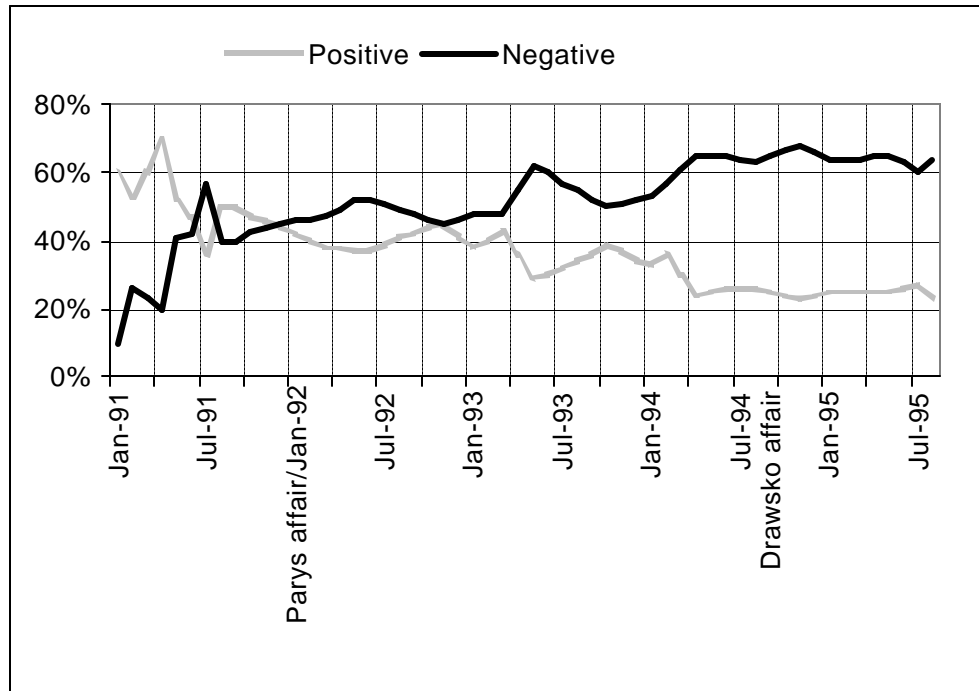


Table 3. Public opinion about policy of the president.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Since the early 1990s, Poland has laid to rest the question marks that loomed over its transition to democracy especially as such doubts pertained to the soldier in the state. In this connection, the role of the military strong man in the past gave cause for anxiety that went beyond Poland's experience in the Warsaw Pact from 1955 until 1991. Such success at stabilizing the democratic form of the state and the soldierly profession, however, has been possible because of the Polish collective determination to re-integrate into Europe, to share Europe's security institutions that assure peace and freedom, and to build democratic institutions and secure freedoms. Politicians and government officials who resisted these efforts or who misunderstood this popular will found themselves tossed from office or simply remain on the fringes of political life.

In this vein, this thesis has examined the character of the Polish military before and after 1989. Furthermore, this study has reflected on the character of NATO and especially its role in the transformation of Europe and beyond since the end of the Soviet era. Joined with this inquiry has been an analysis of the role of military reform in the transition to democracy in general. Finally, this study has devoted considerable attention to the civil-military conflicts of the era 1992-1997 that, at the time, seemed as if they would preclude Poland's effort to join the Alliance. The last chapter contained an analysis of checkered efforts by Polish civilian figures to assert

their control over the military given the legacy of the Polish past before 1939 and after 1945. Particular emphasis fell upon the ups and downs of President Walesa, the Chief of Staff Wilecki, and those civilian ministers of defense caught in between during these important years.

During the presidential election in November 1995, the voters turned on Walesa and chose the post-communist candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski over the heroic symbol of anti-communist resistance and victory in 1989. The victory of Kwasniewski again in the 2000 elections suggest that the Polish society clearly recognized the role of NATO accession and the importance of true civilian control of the military in their efforts to build a "new Poland" ready to take its place in western Europe, despite the 1999 war and the lessening of military prestige within society at large. President Kwasniewski's contribution to democratic civil-military relations, that is, the effect of democratic/ministerial normalcy and an absence of attention-grabbing headlines about confidential meetings of generals proved popular and additionally, the Polish accession to NATO signified an enormous symbolic victory. Kwasniewski won 53.9% of the vote and gained a second term. The figures associated with a kind of Pilsudski-like past of authoritarianism and the man-on-horseback in Polish statecraft, Walesa and Wilecki, gained 1.01% and 0.16% respectively. Walesa as well as former prime ministers Olszewski and Pawlak are now among the least trusted politicians in Polish politics. This state of affairs, no doubt, derives from their having played fast and loose with soldiers and politics.



Broad public support for NATO on one hand, and the role of NATO's PfP, PARP, etc. on the other, exerted a kind of push-pull on the process of democratic transition that cannot be ignored. That is, the imperative of democratic civilian control of the military arose from domestic and international sources in a reciprocal relationship. Polish elites championed the cause, which spread to Polish society as a whole. To be sure, Poland played a key role in the Enlargement of NATO and, in the process, forged bonds of exchange with the organization and key allies that had a beneficial effect when things threatened to unravel in the first half of the 1990s in Polish politics. In this connection of domestic politics, before the institutional framework and the transition to power of ministerial positions could consolidate in the first half of the '90s, public opinion drove the parties and leading figures in government and outside to address popular will for normalcy and the achievement of what came to be called NATO standards. In fact, the Polish experience of having first demanded an opening of the alliance when no will in this direction was present, and then the ups-and-downs of praetorianism might be said to have helped to establish what, by the lights of 2002 (NCCC, four core PfP areas, EAPC, rise of the MAP after 1999, PARP, etc.) can now be called the "NATO Standard." In the years from 1979 until 1989, in which the Polish people showed an extraordinary will to end the cold war and secure for themselves freedom, they did not shirk the additional burdens that arose before them in the first half of the 1990s concerning the effort to consolidate such gains once they seemed threatened by populism and militarism.

The case examined here adds an important example to the theory and practice of democratic civil-military relations in continental Europe and beyond. Other scholars will have more to say about the nexus of domestic political forces and multi-national organizations in this particular form of transition to democracy and the reform of the security sector. To be sure, Poland represents an excellent example. Little of the past necessarily augured for success in the '90s. Pilsudski's authoritarian regime after 1926, the militarized fascism of the late '30s, and the role of the army in communist domestic politics in 1970 and 1981 all suggested that the forces of evil might yet win out. Had populism, praetorianism and militarism carried the day in the middle of the 1990s, the outcome of Polish accession might have been radically different and thus harmed the general Enlargement of NATO in the spring of 1999 at a time of high crisis over the ex-Yugoslavia. Thus, the wide recognition of the full weight imposed by events from 1979 and from 1989 on the Polish electorate led them to embrace democratic statecraft and to shoulder the burdens of a peaceful Europe that emerged in the 1990s. The result has been a stronger and more peaceful west, whose borders now extend beyond the Oder/Neisse to the plains of eastern Europe and act as sign of hope to others who share the same hopes and dreams as the Poles a decade ago.

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